

### "THE NEW ALEXANDRIA"

As the importance of the Mediterranean Sea route gave cause to the location and growth of the City of Alexandria, which from its first beginning in the year 332 B.C. has played a significant role in commerce, traffic and learning, so the growing importance of the Polar Sea air route is influencing the development of Frobisher in Canada's Northwest Territories.

At present Frobisher consists of merely an airport, two Eskimo villages, a Hudson's Bay store, some Department of Northern Affairs installations such as a district office, a small hospital and some houses for the officials, and the ever present R.C.M.P. But it will soon grow; plans are laid and money is available for a large power station, a 20-bed hospital, a new school, a rehabilitation centre and numerous dwellings to house the staff required for such activities.

The airport is at present merely a fair landing field with inadequate runways and not enough buildings to meet requirements. But this is all changing. The Department of Transport has nearly completed a new modern staff house for 60 men; an airline is building a new hangar; the runway will be lengthened to 9,000 feet and resurfaced; a new 6,000-foot taxi-strip is nearly completed, and other improvements are on the drawing board.

Situated half-way between the larger cities on the American West Coast and the capitals of Northwest Europe, Frobisher is in an excellent position to serve trans-Polar flights, which require only one refuelling stop. Also, weather conditions are more favourable at Frobisher than at any other airport in all of Northern Canada and Greenland. Weather records kept for the airport for 14 years show an average of only 74 hours per year of weather under the 200-foot limit.

There is also a possibility of an excellent harbour with a deep water dock at Frobisher. It is the nearest Canadian Arctic deep sea harbour to Montreal, the roadstead is large with good sheltered anchorage and, when a dock is constructed in the near future, it will become still more important as a point for transshipment. For three months every summer large tankers and freighters, some 10,000 tons or more, dock and unload at Frobisher, bringing in all the materials and equipment needed to live comfortably. Also every week a large aircraft arrives from Montreal, the biggest part of its load being mail, which is distributed from Frobisher by other aircraft to many weather and radio stations in the Northwest Territories, and fresh fruit and vegetables and other foods to add variety to the daily meals for the people there.

The climate and living conditions in Alexandria are not ideal, nor are they at Fro-

bisher. While Alexandria is very hot, Frobisher is very cold. Egypt is subject to sand storms; Baffin Island to snow drifts. Alexandria is built on wet and unstable soil; Frobisher is based on rock and permafrost. At Frobisher people seldom have a cold, any kind of food can be kept clean and pure, and there is an abundance of excellent drinking water.

Of course it is a guess or prophecy to say that Frobisher will be the Alexandria of the North. It will never have the teeming population of its counterpart on the Mediterranean, but its location on the crossroad of the world, its possibility of being in a small way the centre for culture and learning for the corner in which it is located is obvious.

Sometimes twice a day and at least eight times a week, a large airliner, which six hours before left Vancouver or Copenhagen, stops for twenty minutes or half an hour, long enough to gulp some thousand gallons of fuel and get a weather report for the rest of the trip. It also brings in a few newspapers printed in Vancouver or Copenhagen the same day, sooner than the same issue reaches some of the regular subscribers.

There are two DC-4's, two DC-3's and four other aircraft stationed at Frobisher. They fly supplies to other airfields, weather and radio stations, mining prospectors and settlements in the Northwest Territories, but come home to roost on Frobisher ramp every night. Besides this there are numerous other aircraft dropping in for fuel.

The number of takeoffs per month at Frobisher is well over 2,500. That gives a daily average of eighty or more aircraft and the refuelling crews are kept busy.

It is hard to believe that only thirty years ago a white man and two Eskimos took three years to travel from the vicinity of Frobisher to Point Barrow in Alaska, with a few side trips, travelling by dog sleigh. Today the trip can be made in one day, returning the next.

However, the dog sleigh is not obsolete - the Eskimos, the Mounted Police and the explorers and prospectors still use them. There are also many good dog teams at Frobisher, should one like to take a Sunday jaunt. In the olden days, it was the only means of transportation. That and ships, but the ships can be used for only about three months of the year.

The airport at Frobisher was started in 1942 and completed the following summer. In 1946 the airport was turned over to R.C.A.F. During the war Frobisher proved to be one of the most important and most used link in the chain of airports from Canada to Europe. Although interest and use of the airport diminished after the war, the importance of the location and the high percentage of usability